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A

Few Minutes Advice

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*The People of Great-Britain,*

ON

REPUBLICS.

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## Few Minutes Advice

T O

*The People of Great-Britain.**My Good Friends and Fellow Countrymen !*

**T**HE present contagious delirium of zeal for alteration and reformation has driven you to the brink of a dangerous precipice : it behoves you, therefore, to be cautious, and maturely consider your situation, before you precipitately tumble, headlong, unawares ; or desperately resolve, voluntarily, to take the adventurous leap. Let then a fellow citizen and plain countryman beg a moment's attention, and offer a few words of cool advice.

You are upon the eve of becoming the heedless instruments of a faction, and tools of a party, who are, for reasons best known to themselves, endeavoring to prevail upon you to plunge into all the calamities a neighbouring nation is at present afflicted with ; to bring on all the confusion, disorder, and bloodshed of a revolution, in order to exchange your present excellent form of government for that of a republic. They would make you believe you are very hardly used and grievously oppressed : like some fly and pretended friends, who would persuade a man in health he is extremely ill, that they may have a chance of getting rid of him, by the poisonous application of a quack medicine. As if grievances and op-

preffions were never heard of in republics. The chief herald or trumpeter of the party is a Mr. Thomas Paine, an American, a shrewd man, whose abilities are well calculated to deceive, and make whatever is good and desiræable appear odious and absurd. He has, in his writings, concealed all the advantages of your government, and seized every circumstance he could draw out into a defect (and what human institution is perfect?) to misrepresent and magnify into a grievance, with all the artifice of reasoning and ingenuity of false argument: Tho' sometimes grossly shallow: He tells you, very abruptly and ridiculously, you have no constitution! Why? Because you were not all present at the framing it. He might as well have told you, you had no legs or heads, because you did not assist at the joining your legs to your bodies and placing your heads on your shoulders. But every one feels whether he has legs or a head; as I trust every man in this kingdom feels there is a constitution, and there are laws which no member of the state can infringe without due punishment. No doubt advantages may be found in both sorts of governments, republics as well as limited monarchies, and mankind may live happily under either. But it is ill judged and cruel in any man (putting sinister views out of the question) to persuade a people, living quietly under one, to produce a convulsion in the state in order to effect an exchange for the other. But particularly a limited monarchy for a republic: as the first has manifestly the advantage of the latter in many respects, but more particularly in this ... That in a limited monarchy the first chair or seat in the state (call it a throne or what you will) is quietly and peaceably occupied, which prevents that eager pursuit of and perpetual contest for pre-eminence so natural to the human breast. For in all societies of men,

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met together for great concerns, there will be some spirits more ardent, more vain, more daring, and more cunning than the rest, who will never be satisfied till they have attained an overbearing authority and uncontroverted sway: and these men will oppress ten times more than any thing in the shape of a limited monarch can do. While man is man, this will be the case; every republic is in danger of it, every republic has felt it, and sooner or later fallen a sacrifice to it. There have been frequent, but fruitless, endeavors to obviate this inconvenience. Some of the antient Grecian republics contrived for this purpose a very harsh law, by which any eminent man might be condemned to ten years banishment, without any alledged crime or reason, by a majority of the people merely writing down his name. Others were so well aware of it, that, though called and being in fact republics, they thought it most adviseable to retain their Kings, only restraining their power by certain laws and limitations. The Romans were very severe in putting to death some of their greatest and ablest men, upon very slight suspicions of aiming at superiority or affecting the King. Yet neither in Athens or in Rome were the people preserved from becoming the dupes and slaves of artful and ambitious men. Perhaps had the Romans, instead of abolishing monarchy, restricted their Kings, they would not afterwards have fallen under that abominable oppression and tyranny they did under their commanders, known in our days by the high sounding title of Emperors; which name means nothing more, but was adopted, or rather retained, lest they should alarm or undeceive the Roman people, who had conceived so fatal a prejudice against the name of King.

In modern times, in our own country, what has been the case? When in the last century, the eyes  
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of men began to be opened, and their senses enlightened, they saw the encroaching and illegal proceedings of their King, some worthy and true patriots boldly stood forth in opposition, overcame their King, and would have brought him within the bounds of reasonable limitation : But what followed ? A fanatical, violent, and self-interested party stepped in, overthrew the measures of the first set of honest men ; till one, more violent, more ambitious, and more hypocritical than the rest, contrived to monopolize the whole power into his own hands, and under the plausible name of Protector, was tenfold more despotic than any preceeding monarch. The people at last became so wearied and sick of their republic, that, upon the death of this man, they were so happy to have the son of their murdered King recalled to fill his father's seat, that they had nearly made him a present of their newly acquired liberties. When afterwards, another infatuated King attempted to infringe the laws and abuse the people, he soon found himself obliged to make a precipitate resignation of that seat he was so unqualified to fill. What did the nation then do ? They did not establish a republic. They had made a sufficient experiment of that form of government. But they placed in the vacant chair the next proper person who had any hereditary claim \* William Prince of Orange : and took care to mark out the line more precisely, and fix a more permanent boundary between the rights of the people and privilege of the King. by an act of Parliament, called, The Bill of Rights. † So that we have had  
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\* Mr. Thomas Paine takes occasion to laugh much at the idea of sending for a Dutch Stadtholder, or German Elector, to rule over us. It must be confessed, it fatally precluded any chance of a Mr. Oliver Cromwell, or Mr. Thomas Paine, from scrambling into the chair himself.

† Mr. Thomas Paine, with a sly and facetious prevercity, has called

our revolution, we have shed our blood, and can boast a constitution, notwithstanding the assertions of Mr. Thomas Paine to the contrary.

What is now transacting in France is exactly similar to what happened with us. Their former government was to the highest degree despotic; was execrable; such as every man, who felt the dignity of his nature, must have felt it incumbent upon him to risk every thing for the overturning. Circumstances concurring, they did overturn it. They brought their King to act under fixed and certain laws, instead of his own will and pleasure. Here had they rested, they would have performed a glorious work; they would have been a happy people: The sense of the nation coincided so universally, they would have had the singular good fortune to have exchanged the most egregious despotism for the most rational liberty: without tumult, and almost without bloodshed. But what followed? The turbulent, furious, and ambitious spirits broke loose; subverted the honest and moderate party, dissolved the national Assembly, formed a Convention (as our long Parliament was dissolved by Cromwell and one of his own appointed in their stead) and, under the name of a republic, have brought on a total anarchy and confusion, and deluged the country in blood. And now, amidst the boast of liberty and equality, we hear of nothing but rapine, plunder, and slaughter, accompanied with more than barbarian atrocity. They are split into a multitude of inveterate factions, whose only liberty and equality seems that of equally cutting the

called this, "A Bill of Wrongs and Insults," because, as he says, it binds posterity, which the framers of it had no right to do. But posterity cannot be bound by it to all eternity. Future Parliaments, if it is the sense of the nation, may alter or abolish it. But let any one read over the articles of that bill, and judge for himself, judge what that man would offer in its stead, who pleads for the abolition.



the throats of those who differ from them in opinion.

Is there any thing in this to imitate or adopt? That it is *their* with you should imitate, is, perhaps, but too plainly apparent: since it is pretty well understood, emissaries are employed here, to stir you up, by suggesting every imaginary hardship, and setting forth every imaginary advantage, to throw this country into the same dreadful situation they are in themselves. Why? (you will say) What use or purpose can it answer to disturb the tranquility of other nations? The only assignable reason is, that they cannot bear to see you enjoy that tranquility, in all the blessings of peace; a trade flourishing beyond any former period; manufactories surpassing the rest of the world; finances recruiting from an expensive, unfortunate, and mistaken contest; while they are torn with civil contentions, and keeping up large armies in opposition to two great continental powers. The same restless, intriguing, and undermining spirit, that formerly prevailed in the despotic councils of Versailles, seems still to reign, even in republican breasts; and they now fight as much by pamphlets and cabal, as sword and musket. "We will conquer the world, we will give a sovereign to all nations!" was the antient presumptuous boast: Equally vain and coxcomical is the present, "We will destroy all kingdoms, we will give liberty to all nations!" Let them first obtain it for themselves; for, at present, they have little that can be called so. Wait till these large armies return upon the country, if the common prudence and policy of other powers would but permit them to do so: much confusion and bloodshed, Humanity cannot but fear, is still in store for them, before they settle down to any fixed and permanent form of government. We were six years involved in the  
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dire animosities of civil war : ten years more of mutual distrust elapsed, before a government was acquired the nation would be contented with, and which, at last, proved a limited monarchy.

Beware, therefore, my friends, how you begin. Be cautious how you engage. Let not Britains submit to be the dupes of a wily American, or the servile instruments of invidious Frenchmen.

Those who are for reforms only, many honest and good men would certainly wish to join, as some might probably be thought of and adopted to advantage ; but in what manner, or of what nature, scarce two men in the nation are agreed : and I think one may venture to assert, without the imputation of timidity of counsel, that, at this time, it is not recommendable to urge them. It is not prudent to open the door to carpenters and masons for the repair of a building, when a set of lawless ruffians are ready to rush in, totally to destroy the edifice, for the sake of what they may plunder, or to erect some new and whimsical fabric of their own fantastic invention. A reform of Parliament would make but too good a stalking horse, behind which will lurk, republicans, Jacobin emissaries, and sectaries of all denominations, besides a numerous class of desperate men, who are ever ready to convulse a state, for what may be gained in a general scramble. All these will out-number you ; and, when the game is sprung, seize upon and devour it.

Once more, then, let me repeat, Beware ! Consider, and reflect ! Reflect on the advantages you possess ; look on the fair side the question. You have the good fortune to be born under the best and most equalized government that was ever invented and put in execution ; and may continue, if it is not your own faults, the happiest people, in that respect, in Europe. You have a King, restrained by the laws and constitution,

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who can do you no wrong, even if inclined: you have the further satisfaction, at present, of a worthy man for your King, well deserving that tribute of popular approbation you have the pleasure of gratifying yourselves, as well as him, in bestowing: who fills quietly that place the designing and ambitious would otherwise be struggling for. Consider the aristocratic part of the kingdom, as it is called, or nobility; equally amenable to the laws with the lowest subject, and, upon a breach of them, liable to undergo the same ignominious punishment that blots from society and the world the meanest felon: not like that lately existing in France, a distinct set of beings, exempt from the taxes the people were burthened with; but consisting chiefly of men taken from the commons as the merited reward bestowed by the country for services themselves or their fathers have performed\* by sea or by land, in law or in trade; rewards which the lowest may hope for and enjoy, as the lowest have obtained them by ability and diligence. The House of Lords is equally interested in and capable of opposing any encroachments of the crown on the liberties of the nation, as the commons; and to shew that there has not been wanting among them a spirit to do it, I beg leave to quote from their journals the end of a protest entered into during the last reign, which does honor to the British peerage. “Lastly, we  
 “thought it more incumbent upon us to insist on  
 “this motion for the sake of this Royal Family  
 “under which alone we are convinced we live  
 “Free, and under this Royal Family we are fully  
 “determined We Will Live Free.” Look on the clergy of the realm; Who are they that possess the highest dignities and revenue? Not as in  
 France

\* There are, no doubt, some exceptions; but if any body will, impartially, look over the list of Peers, they will find by far the majority have risen as is here asserted.

France the needy offspring of nobility, qualified or unqualified, profligate or virtuous: but those who have raised themselves by genius, assiduity, and worth, from the most common and ordinary ranks of life. Where can you find greater equalization? Here are a set of estates and possessions thrown among the general society, obtainable by any of you or your children, as their talents and merits shall deserve; \* and should the necessary education be too expensive, there are foundations ample, and endowments liberal, to have recourse to. What nation can boast such benevolent and multiplied endowments, hospitals, and charities? In what country but England were poor laws ever heard of?

Our Parliaments, you will say, are corrupt. They may be so in some degree; but is there no corruption in the national convention? Or do you flatter yourselves there would be none in an English convention? However, it may be some satisfaction to think, as is pretty evident from accounts, they are not so corrupt now as they were in the two preceding reigns: besides, the remedy is, in a great measure, in your own hands already. You receive bribes yourselves, and complain your representatives are bribed; you first sell yourselves, and then complain of being sold. Those who buy you depend upon it will sell you. You draw immense sums out of the pockets of your candidates, to squander in eating and drinking, and are surprized they will reimburse themselves with places and pensions. Reform yourselves first; and if you still find your Parliaments corrupt, then will be the time to urge and enforce your complaints; and the whole kingdom will join in causing the mode of representation to be altered  
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\* That there are so many poor among the Clergy is owing to this very circumstance, for where merit is fully rewarded there will be numerous claimants, who cannot all be satisfied.



and amended. But, while you have your senses, let nothing induce you to quit the government of a single King, who is subject to the laws, to submit yourselves to numberless Kings, subject to no laws but what they make for themselves. Would you have more Protectors, more Cromwells? Robertspieres, Marats, Chabauds, &c. ? You have too much sense I am sure, upon a moment's reflection, to make such a choice. Should, therefore, any of the silly and misguided part of the community raise the thoughtless cry of No King! No Parliament! I hope you will join your true friends in returning that of

**NO CROMWELLS!**

**NO PAINES!**

**NO REPUBLICAN TYRANTS!**

**Liberty and the Constitution of  
Old England for ever!**

